

149201



United States
General Accounting Office

National Security and
International Affairs Division



149201

B-253323

May 18, 1993

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military
Forces and Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Ronald K. Machtley
House of Representatives

This letter responds to your request for our preliminary observations on the reserve component officers' professional military education¹ system in the Department of the Army. Your Subcommittee and the Panel on Military Education before it have expressed interest in the Department of Defense's downsizing and proposed transfer of functions from the active component to the reserve components. You stated that this, along with the general readiness and performance of reserve components in the Gulf War, meant that changes would probably be necessary in the reserve components' professional military education.

Reserve components in the Army consist of the Army National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve. Their purpose is to provide trained units and individuals to supplement the active component in time of war or national emergency.

¹Professional military education provides individuals with the skills, knowledge, and understanding that enable them to make sound decisions in progressively more demanding command and staff positions within the national security environment. It addresses the military, political, economic, social, and psychological dimensions of national security with varying degrees of emphasis. These include planning and conducting war, service organizations, joint and combined operations, force employment and deployment concepts, and military leadership.

057236/149201

About 60 percent of all Department of Defense reserve component commissioned officers are assigned to the Department of the Army.

RESULTS IN BRIEF

Although the active and reserve components have the same educational requirements, differences exist between the content of the two education programs.

- Because reserve component officers have less time available for formal professional military education, it may take them longer to complete their educational requirements.
- The reserve program is less structured than the active duty program.
- Reserve component officers often change specialties, whereas active component officers usually keep the same one.
- The Army does not usually consider reserve component officers' expertise from their civilian jobs when determining the need for certain military education.

RESERVE COMPONENTS' EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS
TAKE LONGER TO COMPLETE

Professional military education requirements for reserve component officers are the same as active component officers, but they may take longer to complete. Education for a reserve component officer is required before that officer is promoted to the next level.

After receiving training in the resident officer basic course, first lieutenants and captains normally begin the intermediate level with the nonresident officer advanced course. The next phase is the nonresident Combined Arms and Services Staff School² course.

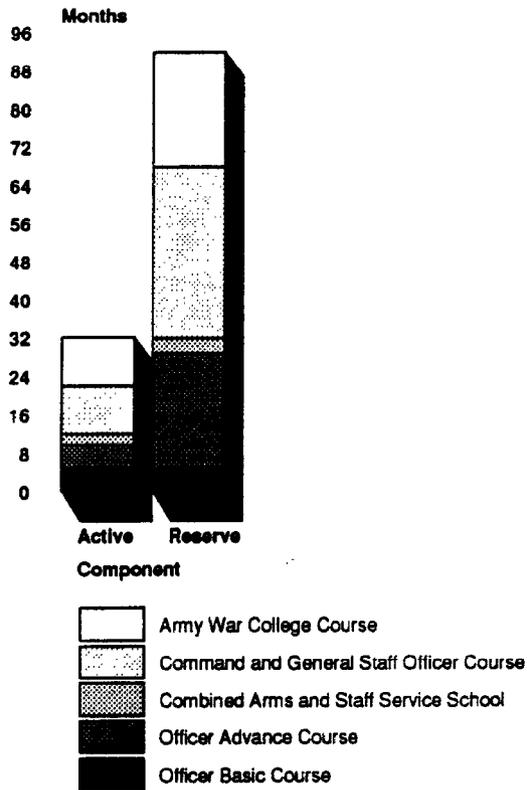
²Starting on October 1, 1994, this course will be a prerequisite before a reserve component officer can attend the Command and General Staff Officer Course.

The final intermediate level phase is completion of the Command and General Staff Officer course for promotion to lieutenant colonel after 50 percent of the nonresident course is completed. If a reserve component officer does not complete the remaining 50 percent within 3 years, the officer receives a discharge.³ Reserve component officers, on a limited basis, attend this course as a resident while an active component officer may attend this and some of the other above courses as a nonresident or complete them by correspondence.

Figure 1 shows that reserve component officers typically take longer than active duty officers to complete their military education.

³Effective October 1, 1993, this course will not be required for reserve component officers, except as a prerequisite for promotion to the rank of colonel.

Figure 1: Comparison of Time Needed by Active Versus Reserve Officers to Complete Education Requirements



Because they have civilian jobs, reserve component officers have less time available for formal professional military education. Active duty officers can usually perform their occupational specialties on a full-time basis and fulfill their education and training requirements during their duty time--approximately 260 weekdays per year. On the other hand, an official in the National Guard Bureau said that reserve officers usually complete these educational requirements on a part-time basis after devoting from 39 days (8 hours a day) to about 73 days during a calendar year. In rare instances, a reserve officer may attend education and training activities for more than 73 days.

The time for education in addition to the 39 to 73 days is not paid by the government.

RESERVE OFFICER PROFESSIONAL MILITARY
EDUCATION PROGRAM LESS STRUCTURED
THAN ACTIVE DUTY PROGRAM

The active component professional military education program is more highly structured than the reserve component's program. The active component's professional military education is centrally managed, and Army headquarters and field organizations help ensure that active duty officers receive the appropriate education and training at prescribed intervals in their careers.

In contrast, the reserve components do not have all of the components of the active component management system, although the Army would like to develop a fully comparable system in fiscal year 1995. Fort Leavenworth and Fort Sill officials stated that Army reserve component officers must, for the most part, manage their own professional military education development.

These officials noted that reserve component officers must take more responsibility to ensure that they receive the required education at the appropriate time. The reserve component education structure, Fort Leavenworth officials said, has resulted in slower progress in the reserve component officer's military career, in part, because of the lack of emphasis by senior leaders to ensure that the officer receives education at crucial stages of an officer's career.

RESERVE COMPONENT OFFICERS OFTEN HAVE
MULTIPLE MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTIES

Another unique aspect of reserve component education deals with such Army military occupational specialties as armor, artillery, medical, clergy, and finance. Active component officers usually keep the same specialty throughout their entire military career, while reserve component officers may have several. Reserve component officers' civilian jobs often cause them to transfer to reserve units that may not have openings for their specialty. As a result, they must train for a new specialty.

Multiple specialties have their drawbacks. For example, at Fort Sill, field artillery (cannons and other large guns) is the main specialty for officers. Officers in this specialty must be educated and trained to operate, maintain, and fire the artillery. Fort Sill officials were concerned about safety during field artillery drills because not all the reserve officers had the necessary education, training, and experience to operate the artillery. In some cases, reserve officers had transferred from other units and had different occupational specialties. Because some reserve officers were not as proficient as active component officers, the officials were particularly concerned about safety during exercises when live ammunition is used.

Officials at the National Guard Bureau and the Office of the Chief of Army Reserve said that because Army reserve officers are often qualified in more than one specialty, this presents a challenge in designing courses to meet their needs.

ARMY DOES NOT TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE
OF CIVILIAN EDUCATION SKILLS

Because reserve component officers have full-time civilian jobs, they may need fewer professional military education courses in some areas than the active duty officers. For example, reserve officers who are civilian managers may not need to take courses on such subjects as organizational skills. However, few attempts are made to factor this into the decision to place students in particular classes. These officers take the same basic managerial courses that other officers take who do not possess these skills. Such courses may displace more needed courses given the limited time available for education and training.

Reserve component soldiers often have management and leadership skills experiences from their civilian endeavors that are not recognized by the Army until the individual applies them in training or at school. Fort Leavenworth and Fort Sill personnel stated that a system to both recognize and take full advantage of a reserve officer's civilian skills has not been established.

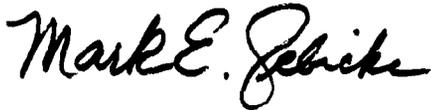
- - - - -

B-253323

We interviewed officials at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Fort Monroe, Virginia; and Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and obtained their views on reserve officer professional military education. We combined these views with information we obtained from Army headquarters officials. We also gathered and analyzed data on reserve officer professional military education from these locations. This work was performed from August 1992 through November 1992 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Please contact me at (202) 512-5140 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this letter. Other contributors to this letter were George E. Breen, Jr., Assistant Director, and Frank Bowers, Senior Evaluator.

Sincerely yours,



Mark E. Gebicke
Director, Military Operations
and Capabilities Issues

(391211)